

A FUNDAÇÃO FORD NO BRASIL

FAPESP



Bradford Smith
Celina Vargas do Amaral Peixoto
Elisa Pereira Reis
Elza Berquó
Fernando Homem de Melo
Franklin Thomas
Fúlvia Rosenberg
Joan Dassin
Juarez Rubens Brandão Lopes
Marcelo de Paiva Abreu
Mário Brockman Machado
Silke Weber
Simon Schwartzman

A FUNDAÇÃO FORD NO BRASIL

Sergio Miceli
organizador

A FUNDAÇÃO FORD NO BRASIL

EDITORA SUMARÉ

IDESP — Instituto de Estudos Econômicos, Sociais e
Políticos de São Paulo

Av. Dr. Arnaldo, 1973

telefone: (011) 263-3259

fax: (011) 263-1605

Cep: 01255-000 — São Paulo — SP

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Capa: *Diana Mindlin*

Tradução: *Alasdair G. Burnian*

Revisão: *José Waldir Santos Moraes* (português)

Paul Freston (inglês)

DTP: *Videograf — Aristeu Escobar Branco*

Dados Internacionais de Catalogação na Publicação (CIP)
(Câmara Brasileira do Livro, SP, Brasil)

A Fundação Ford no Brasil / Sérgio Miceli coordenador.
— São Paulo : Editora Sumaré : FAPESP, 1993.

Bibliografia.

1. Ciências sociais 2. Fundação Ford — Brasil —
História I. Miceli, Sérgio, 1945 —

93-2451

CDD-001.44060981

Índices para catálogo sistemático:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Brasil : Fundação Ford : História | 001.44060981 |
| 2. Fundação Ford : Brasil : História | 001.44060981 |

ISBN 85-85408-13-8

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EDUCATING THE FORD FOUNDATION

Simon Schwartzman



*Simon Schwartzman, Diretor do Núcleo de
Pesquisa sobre o Ensino Superior
(NUPES) da Universidade
de São Paulo (USP).*

*I*n its thirty years of activities in Brazil, the Ford Foundation has concentrated its efforts on strengthening advanced education and training in the social sciences, with fellowships, research awards and institutional support, and in projects and activities relevant to underprivileged groups. Fellowships, support for graduate programs and research, academic meetings and related activities have played a major role in Brazilian education. The Foundation's participation in education in a narrower sense, however — support of departments of education and centers for educational research, teacher training, preparation of teaching materials, and so forth — has been much smaller. A cursory examination of the list of projects supported by the Foundation in these years shows that only about 30 projects, worth about 7 million dollars (one tenth of the total) dealt directly with education.

About half of these resources were applied in the period from 1964 to 1978, in projects aimed at contributing directly to the improvement of educational institutions, through the preparation of science teaching materials, teacher training, curriculum development and support for pilot and regional educational projects. The two largest grants in this period, both amounting to 800 thousand dollars, were given to CAPES, an agency of the Ministry of Education, to provide fellowships for students specializing in science education, and for the development of a specialized center for vocational technical education in São Paulo; another grant was the pilot project to improve primary education in the underprivileged districts of Rio de Janeiro. Starting in 1978, the

relevant and effective. There is, in a sense, an attempt to educate the Ford Foundation about Brazilian education. What was learned in this process, and what was forgotten?

It is probably not by chance that the first of these documents, written in 1960, dealt with the universities, the second, in 1965, with secondary education, and the third, in 1970, with basic education, I wonder whether there is not a fourth, of the eighties, dealing with popular education and culture. This sequence may reflect an evolution from a concern with elite reform, to an effort to reach ever broader social groups, expressing perhaps a growing scepticism about what elites could do to improve the lot of the underprivileged.

The 1960 report was signed by Oliver C. Carmichael (no references to other names or institutional affiliations), who wrote it on behalf of the "Foundation Committee," which visited 17 Brazilian universities in that year². The image they got of Brazilian higher education was not very flattering:

"Based on U.S. standards, Higher Education in Brazil is unorganized, confused, if not chaotic, and generally of low quality. This does not mean that it is hopeless. In most instances, progress is being made (. . .) Interest is focused mostly on science and technology. The conception of a complete university with humanistic-social studies, general scientific instruction for the non-scientist, undergraduate and graduate curricula, such as we take for granted in the United States, is not exemplified in a single university in Brazil. The notion of a university library (. . .) is practically absent from educational thinking."

The closest they found to the American model were the Faculties of Philosophy, established in Brazil in the 1930s, as a place for secondary school teacher training, undergraduate education in

2. Report to Ford Foundation on Universities in Brazil and Suggestions for Possible Aid for Brazilian Higher Education, 1960.

the sciences and the humanities, and whenever possible (in fact, only at the Universidade de São Paulo, and, to a smaller degree, in Rio de Janeiro), a place for research. The Committee's main recommendation was to use the Faculties of Philosophy to create the real universities Brazil needed, and in so doing rekindled the intentions and hopes which presided the organization of these faculties in the 1930s.

For the report, the main reason why Brazilians did not change their faculties of philosophy into the seeds of real universities was because they did not know how to do it, they did not have a pattern to follow. Thus the main recommendation: to take one of the most promising faculties, invest resources in it, and make it a pattern for the whole country. Two things could do the trick, according to the report, in "three to four years." First, to create a central library, based on "a trained librarian gifted in promoting interest in books, in making the library a popular place, with a browsing room and attractive displays of new books"; and second, to groom in the U.S. a small group of young university people, spending "as much as two years studying university administration with particular reference to liberal education and its relation to undergraduate, technical and professional education", to lead the institution. The consequences of such small investments would be enormous:

"1) It would demonstrate what constitutes a real university with its undergraduate and graduate programs of humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, coordinated in such manner as to produce the highest quality of teaching and research in the most economical way; 2) it would also point the way to the development of the Faculties of Philosophy as the coordinating element in the university structure (. . .); it would provide a pattern for the development of university libraries."

It would be difficult to find a better and more naive example of what would be called, a few years later, "cultural imperialism." There is no reference, in the document, to the ideas of the people involved with Brazilian higher education. The mission

was well impressed, however, by the rector of the Universidade de São Paulo, Antônio Barros Ulhoa Cintra, for obvious reasons: "he has been in the United States three times (. . .). He speaks English, a little slowly at times, but very well. He appears to have great respect and admiration for the American university system." The committee did not notice, or did not care, that Brazilian higher education was patterned on the European, Napoleonic model, and could not be transformed by a simple demonstration into the American one; no attempt was made to understand why the notion that the Faculties of Philosophy should become the coordinating center of the universities had failed in the previous thirty years; no mention was made of the role of government in the regulation of higher education, of the history of political activism among the university students, or of the way professions were organized and the roles the universities played in granting professional credentials to a small section of the population. They were certainly unaware of the irony implicit in their suggestion that the Universidade de São Paulo should provide the model for the rest of the country; in the 1930s, the Brazilian government tried to make the Rio de Janeiro university (then called the Universidade do Brasil) play this role, and the Universidade de São Paulo was the stronghold of resistance against this drive toward centralization and standardization³.

The Ford Foundation did not follow these recommendations, although it did support a much more ambitious project in Chile, through a large-scale cooperation program between the Universidad de Chile and the University of California. In Brazil, it followed a much more cautious path, dealing with basic secondary education at first, supporting the development of materials for science teaching, teacher training and a pilot project in basic education.

3. The details of this story can be seen in S. Schwartzman, *A Space for Science — the Development of the Scientific Community in Brazil* (Penn Press, 1991), chapter 5, "The 1930 Revolution and the New Universities", 105-138.

The 1965 mission, headed by the President of the University of Minnesota, Meredith Wilson⁴, was very perceptive of the Brazilian situation, and provided much better advice. Overreacting against the tendency to self-righteousness, like the one of the 1960 mission, it was, sometimes, patronizing. The report starts by saying that "the mission originated no new ideas; Brazilians know their problems, and many have bold solutions." Talking about rote learning and high dropout rates in primary school, they "hasten to add that Brazilian children are a delight; their spontaneity and enthusiasm even in formal classroom conditions is wonderful indeed." The problems of overcrowding in adequate schools were couched by the statement that "Brazilians are very efficient in the use of space."

Their evaluations and recommendations, however, were very perceptive, and were not affected by these peccadillos. Looking at basic (four year) education, they observed, with premonition, that "Brazilians perhaps tend to place too much emphasis on bricks and mortar. One senses the feeling that no building is better than one which is not of the latest design." They noted the lack of books and teaching materials in the schools, and thought that this could explain the predominance of rote learning, which would explain in turn the high dropout rates they saw in the statistics they were given. Although they accepted these data at their face value, they challenged the dominant assumption that students left school because they had to work, and looked for alternative explanations⁵.

4. Ford Foundation Report on Secondary Education in Brazil, August 1965. Meredith Wilson, Chairman, President of the University of Minnesota; John O'Neil, Dean of the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University; Melvin Barnes, Superintendent of Schools, Portland, Oregon; Alden Dunham, Director of Admission, Princeton University.

5. One of these tables reproduced in the report was the traditional educational pyramid based on data from the Ministry of Education, which showed that 1.1 million students finished the first year of primary school in 1945, and only 593 thousand finished the second year in 1946. The usual interpretation was that this meant a dropout rate of about 50%, neglecting the weight of those who simply did not get promoted, swelling the ranks of first year entrants. This correction of the standard interpretation of educational data, and the analysis of their policy consequences, is the product of the research being done by Sérgio Costa Ribeiro, with Ford Foundation support.

Secondary education (the old *ginásio*, 5-8, and the *colegial*, 9-11) was seen as an antiquated, elite oriented system based on discriminatory admission exams, the *vestibular*. Most of their recommendations coincided with what was done in the following years: the *exame de admissão* was eliminated, the first 8 years of education were unified in a basic cycle of primary education, and, although the *vestibular* did not disappear, there was a movement toward unification and standardization of university admission procedures in the large centers (the *vestibular unificado*). The notion that secondary schools should provide vocational education was turned into law (and failed).

Looking at the content of secondary education, they observed how the legislation allowed for much more flexibility and innovation than were actually practiced, and how teaching was distant from reality:

"... little effort has been made to adapt the curriculum to local condition, and it seems to the mission members that insufficient attention is given to making the curriculum relevant to the interests and needs of the students. One would like to see much more attention paid to current events, social problems, and the meaning of democratic government. Art and music are distinctly short-changed, and at the *ginásio* level, especially in the last two years. added opportunities should be given students to explore the various vocational-type programs that are available at the *colégio* level."

Most comments and recommendations dealt with the preparation of secondary school teachers. They noted that teachers received too little general education, and that "in some instances study in depth goes further than the realities of secondary teaching suggest it should." They were skeptical about general didactics ("just as this course is suspect in the United States, so Brazilians might as well take a look to see if the content is sufficiently rigorous"), educational psychology ("Brazilians are especially taken by the importance of psychology") and school administration. Because of their reservations against these general education subjects, they argued against the pressures to move secondary school teaching away from the Faculdades de Filosofia and into

the schools of education. They were appalled by the teacher employment picture ("atrocious"), and could not see beyond the haze of the educational bureaucracy: "school administration in Brazil is a real can of worms. By North American standards there is none." They noted that, in the U.S., "the tone and atmosphere of a school is set by the principal who heads it," and tried to put forward some suggestions which were probably in the wrong direction, like strengthening the state departments of education, and reducing the freedom of private schools to hire their teachers. Finally, they noted the absence of reliable statistics, a hindrance to the realistic planning they deemed necessary.

For the Ford Foundation, the mission recommended that it should help to increase Brazil's awareness of the need to increase expenditures in education (from 2 to 4 percent of GNP), assistance to the development and distribution of curricular materials, the reorganization of the *Exame Vestibular*, support to the development of educational statistics, a more active role in teacher training and the establishment of experimental secondary schools associated with the universities. The final recommendation was that the Foundation's officers should follow up the meetings held by the mission with key Brazilian leaders: "an investment in men might be as good a handle as any that can be found for educational improvement."

An occasion for investment in men was the Conference on the educational experience in Latin America convened by the Ford Foundation in May, 1970, in Buenos Aires, which was followed a year later by a meeting of the Foundation educational and representational staff in Rio de Janeiro, 1971. Of the documents produced by these events, I was able to examine the Buenos Aires conference report, and a draft of a policy statement on Ford Foundation assistance to Latin American education.⁶

6. *A Report on a Conference on the Educational Experience of Latin America*. The Ford Foundation, September, 1970 (mimeographed); and *Draft: Policy Statement on Ford Foundation Assistance to Latin American Education*, written by R. Drysdale and R. Sharpe, July, 1971.

The Buenos Aires meeting brought together the leadership of Ford Foundation's Latin American sector (including Reynold Carlson, William Carmichael, Reuben Frodin, K. N. Rao, Kalman H. Silvert and Abraham Lowenthal), and several well known Latin American social scientists working on education, including Patrício Cariola, Ernesto Shiefelbein, Aldo Solari, Aparecida Jolly Gouveia and a few practitioners from different countries.

In those years, dependency theory was on the rise, and many countries (including Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Peru) were under military dictatorships. The Latin Americans bombarded the Ford Foundation officers with the dangers of cultural and philanthropic imperialism and the need to include ideologies and social class considerations in their activities.

The policy statement draft was very precise in reproducing the Latin American views on these matters, and in stressing that they were the Latin Americans', not the North Americans' point of view. "It was stated clearly," said the draft, "that the task of combining methods and resources to gain educational development is not only technical in nature; it is also ideological, ethical and moral." "Some felt," the document goes on, "that most efforts to 'modernize' education are, in the main, importations of educational trends in developed countries which further economic, technical and cultural dependency." Agreeing or not, the document emphasized that the Foundation must be sensitive and responsive to these themes shared through the Region, and was glad to notice that the Foundation was accepted as a partner in the process of development and change, and that more Latin Americans must be involved in the process of developing its programs. The document conceded, furthermore, that "education is a creation of a society as part of the general socialization process," and as such it was not neutral, but could play either a conservative or an innovative role, depending on the group and sector promoting it. More to the point, the report concluded that, "while debate and consideration of ideology and educational goals are urgently called for and desired (. . .), there is a cold, hard reality that must be faced. It may be that the education which is actually

received by those lucky enough to gain the opportunity has little to do with the goals and plans set by the policy makers. The system has little capacity to respond to their dictates."

The basic recommendation of the report was that educational change in the region could only come about as a fruit of the labors of Latin Americans, and that the Foundation could help by supporting the creation of a competent, modern leadership. Educational research and development should be strengthened, and the decision-making capacity of key institutions should be increased. The research component should not be limited to specialists in education, but "based upon the disciplines of the social and behavioral scientists"; and should include practical, as well as conceptual and analytic components: "not only must the purely epistemological issues be confronted; we must also be concerned with the problems of implementation, including feasibility and outcome"; "there should be some leverage effect [in research activities], in the sense that findings should reflect existing resource allocation decisions." There was also a recommendation not to use the Foundation's resources to establish new, large and multi-functional regional institutions, a suggestion that appeared in the Buenos Aires meeting. Instead, the policy should be to work with the present institutions, and, because of the training component, there was also a "clear bias toward the university base in whatever form may be possible and consistent with the type of research to be stressed in a given situation." At the end, the document commented on a few leading institutions to be supported (including the Fundação Carlos Chagas in São Paulo), a list of priority problems to be addressed, and a discussion of different modes of Foundation assistance, from post-graduate training abroad to support for education planning activities, pilot projects and institutional support.

The list of projects supported in the next several years followed in part these recommendations. Research on education was strongly supported, but it is not clear that the links with

social sciences were as strong as they should be. In 1976 Martin Carnoy wrote a report on the Social Science and Education program of the school of Education, Universidade de Minas Gerais, and one of the central issues he raised was precisely the need to bring social science methods and concepts to bear on educational research: "students are not getting a strong enough base in *one* social science they would like to specialize in. In part, more intensive study of a social science in the social science faculties would help prepare students more adequately in the methodology area (. . .). The students generally knew a lot about the social science approach to education but lacked depth in any specific social science methodology."

In terms of policy relevance, a number of projects supported in those years had the puzzling expression of "research and popular education" in their title. They were probably part of the "action-research" trend which became fashionable among Brazilian education academics. Action-research meant that researchers should not only enquire about their subjects, but get involved with them, get their participation in the very definition of the research project, data collection and analysis, and use the knowledge obtained to transform their lives. Action-research came often to be associated with the rejection of conventional methodologies of the social sciences, including the use of quantitative methods and abstract concepts, and one wonders what the results of these projects have been, both in terms of new knowledge and of actual social transformation. Other projects, more frequent in the last decades, tried to make a direct impact on the fate of underprivileged groups, without pretending to link it with research. It would be interesting to know how much impact these projects actually had, and if they remained limited to the groups which benefitted directly from the support, or were propagated to broader sectors of society.

No project in the seventies and eighties dealt directly with government agencies responsible for education policies, trying to improve their knowledge and decision-making capabilities. The reasons are not difficult to imagine. In Brazil, education

authorities are often political appointees, and their activities consist in the administration of daily routines and paper shuffling, or in the eventual distribution of surplus money and contracts among political associates. Only sophisticated bureaucracies invest in long-term manpower training, and use research to underscore and help their decisions. The Ford Foundation does not have the scale of resources capable of affecting changes in a whole sector of government, like the World Bank or the Inter American Bank can do, and even for them positive results of large investments are uncertain. In these conditions, the policy impact the Foundation could have depends on the quality and relevance of the research groups it supports, their ability to shape opinion and, ultimately, on the issues and actors involved in the policy making process. There are some good examples of this in the limited experience of NUPES, the Universidade de São Paulo's research group on higher education. Through our activities, we helped to focus the attention of higher education authorities on the issues of academic evaluation, autonomy, and institutional differentiation, and our research into students' career patterns are being used in the discussions of curricular reform; while the work on educational statistics carried on in association with the Laboratório Nacional de Computação Científica is helping to change the center of attention from school construction to the problems of repetition and the quality of basic education. These issues are far from settled, but the fact that we are considered valid actors in their discussion suggests that we are being relevant, although not to the point of actually shaping the way governments and universities behave.

In conclusion, I would contend, from the lessons of the past, that the Ford Foundation should continue to concentrate its efforts in the field of education in supporting groups working in areas which can shape the agenda of the educational debate. As Brazil opens up its borders to international competition, education will cease to be a simple matter of social equity and culture,

to become the most important deciding factor of the country's ability to participate in this new game. The dominant thinking is still very much on "bricks and mortar" and "more money," with little awareness and consensus about the minimum agenda of issues and problems to be tackled. Brazilian education is in dire need of fresh ideas — on what to do with oversized educational bureaucracies, how to foster institutional autonomy, the perspectives of the teaching profession, the problems of school failure and functional illiteracy, the modernization of curricula at the secondary school (and a proper understanding of what is wrong with science education), the possibilities of reintroducing general education in the universities, and other issues.

One way of helping to change the agenda is through a more decided support for international cooperation and exchange of views. The ideas put forward by the 1965 mission on secondary education, for instance, are still valid and relevant, and it would be important to have visitors of that caliber bringing in their perceptions more regularly. The policy statement of 1971 was probably too defensive in reaction to the cry of "cultural imperialism!", and it is time to redress the balance.

The Foundation could also be more daring in following up and supporting innovative actions which are being taken by the administration of several Brazilian states and municipalities, from support for pilot projects to follow-up studies and discussion seminars. More than money, its unique contribution could be to link these experiences to what is taking place in other countries and regions, and to bring the contribution of social scientists that have been, so far, away from education as an area of concern.

One lesson the Foundation has learned in these years is that change does not come only from above, but should be stimulated and fostered from below. The importance of the support the Foundation provides for grassroots movements and actions are not so much in the direct benefit it provides for a few groups, but on the demonstration effect these experiences can have for the whole country. The evaluation and eventual generalization of

these experiences are still to be carried out, and for this it will be necessary to have the concourse of researchers and concerned educators, which do exist.

The main lesson the Ford Foundation has got from these thirty years of working with education is, I believe, where its particular strength lies, which is on its commitment to the values of knowledge and competence, and, working from that, on its ability to relate to people from different sectors and cultures, bring them together, and help to shape the issues, in education and in other fields.

Appendix

Ford Foundation grants in Brazil related to Education,
1963-1993

Code number	Project	Institution	Value in US\$	End year
6300151	Study of USA "gray areas" by teachers from Rio de Janeiro	<i>Institute International Education</i>	10,980	1963
6100083	Improvement of secondary school science teaching	<i>FUNBEC</i>	170,000	1964
6200231	Pilot project to improve primary education in the underprivileged districts of Rio de Janeiro	<i>Estado da Guanabara</i>	225,000	1966
6400485	Establishment of a science teaching center in Northeast Brazil	<i>Universidade Federal de Pernambuco</i>	150,000	1968
6700103	Planning and curriculum development for the Faculty of Education	<i>UFRJ</i>	59,054	1969
6300579	Provision of fellowships and specialized training programs for graduate students and science professors from Brazil	<i>CAPES</i>	799,605	1970
670111	Improvement of secondary school science education	<i>FUNBEC</i>	86,000	1970
6600193	Teacher training program in vocational-agricultural education	<i>Universidade Federal do Paraná</i>	333,646	1971
6700451	Regional Training Program for Secondary School Teachers of Languages	<i>PUC/RGS</i>	52,500	1972
6700452	Regional Training Program for Secondary School Teachers	<i>Universidade Federal da Bahia</i>	77,000	1972

Code number	Project	Institution	Value in US\$	End year
6500324	Development of a national center for vocational technical education at the school in Brazil	<i>Escola Técnica Celso Sukow da Fonseca</i>	904,138	1972
6700449	Development of regional teaching training in Rio Grande do Sul	<i>PUC/RGS</i>	574,829	1972
6700451	Regional training program for secondary school teachers of Languages	<i>PUC/RGS</i>	52,500	1972
7350482	2 nd seminar for directors of Latin American Educational Research Centers	<i>Fundação Carlos Chagas</i>	5,000	1973
6600409	Development of university admission examinations in Brazil	<i>Fundação Carlos Chagas</i>	252,000	1975
7400653	Research on Education and Economic Development in Latin America	<i>ECIEL</i>	125,000	1977
7000028	Development of science teaching materials	<i>FUNBEC</i>	417,586	1978
7200244	Educational research program in the Faculty of Education	<i>Universidade do Ceará</i>	78,011	1978
7100409	Development of an educational research program	<i>Fundação Carlos Chagas</i>	435,488	1979
8250513	Innovative education program for children from disadvantaged families	<i>GEEMPA</i>	50,966	1983
8250541	Community program of infant child care and preschool education	<i>Sociedade Primeiro de Maio</i>	50,292	1983
7700469	Program of research on the work and education of women	<i>Fundação Carlos Chagas</i>	220,000	1983

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Code number	Project	Institution	Value in US\$	End year
7290245	Educational research awards and fellowships in Brazil	<i>Ford Foundation</i>	917,143	1983
8250936	Research and popular education on community organization in illegal urban settlements in greater S. Paulo	<i>PUC/SP</i>	33,258	1983
8250662	Innovative community pre-school project in the Parish of Our Lady of Fatima	<i>Arquidiocese São Paulo</i>	25,675	1983
8290167	Developing countries small program actions — education and culture	<i>Ford Foundation</i>	128,754	1984
8250658	Community program of infant child care and preschool education	<i>Plataforma</i>	51,200	1984
800846	Community projects on sex education and child care	<i>Fundação Carlos Chagas</i>	130,000	1984
8300465	Experimental reading program for children from disadvantaged urban communities in Porto Alegre	<i>GEEMPA</i>	205,557	1986
7850596	Social science research and training in the field of education	<i>Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais</i>	200,000	1987
9000378	Support for a seminar on challenges facing universities and private research centers in Brasil	<i>CEBRAP</i>	15,000	1990
9059334	Quantitative Research on Brazilian education system	<i>USP</i>	50,000	1991
8801113	Consolidation of documentation and computer services for popular education and human rights work	<i>Luís Freire Cultural Center</i>	114,600	1991

Code number	Project	Institution	Value in US\$	End year
8900513	Training of "street educators" working with disadvantaged youth in Rio de Janeiro	<i>Associação Beneficente São Marinho</i>	94,000	1992
9100632	Survey research on university students	<i>IUPERJ</i>	41,700	1992
9100631	Quantitative research on Brazilian education system	<i>USP</i>	50,000	1993
8900634	Research Center on Brazil's higher education system	<i>USP</i>	261,000	1993
9151349	college preparatory training and supplemental course work for poor black students	<i>Roda Viva</i>	50,000	1993

A PROPÓSITO DO TEXTO "EDUCATING THE FORD FOUNDATION"

Silke Weber

Ao discutir o texto apresentado por Schwartzman, pretendo dirigir os meus comentários à postura mais geral sobre educação nele defendida e à proposta de agenda e de estratégias que ele contém.

Gostaria de destacar, inicialmente, a propriedade do título — A Educação da Fundação Ford — e da abordagem utilizada pelo autor, esclarecer momentos marcantes do processo educativo de sua relação com o Brasil, de uma Fundação que se dispõe a desempenhar um papel educacional relevante, na medida em que selecionou como prioridade de atuação a formação de quadros, primeiramente acadêmicos, mais adiante, ampliando o raio de ação, o desenvolvimento de iniciativas de educação popular.

Vale salientar, tal como vem sendo exposto nas diferentes intervenções, e também demonstrado no material analisado pelo autor, o quanto a atuação da Fundação Ford tem sido mesclada e permeada pelas demandas e preocupações características dos interlocutores presentes em cada fase decisória de sua

contribuição ao país, posição que é mais uma vez reiterada na própria forma escolhida para festejar o seu 3º ano de Brasil: a promoção e organização deste seminário.

Ao refletir sobre a educação da Ford, Simon Schwartzman retraça, de certo modo, momentos recentes da história da educação brasileira e o lugar que os seus problemas têm obtido no debate acadêmico e social. O seu texto, se, de um lado, deixa clara a persistência ou estabilidade de nossos problemas educacionais, por outro, evidencia que elas têm sido hoje colocados em outros termos, mostrando, em meu modo de ver, o quanto se avançou, nos últimos trinta anos, no estabelecimento de um consenso quanto aos problemas centrais da educação no país.

De fato, na última década — em associação com o aprofundamento da luta em favor da democracia e a generalização do debate educacional alimentado, principalmente, pela produção acadêmica oriunda dos nascentes cursos de pós-graduação nas áreas de Ciências Humanas e Sociais e da Educação — constata-se uma convergência de preocupações e propostas em relação à educação nos seus diferentes níveis, que vêm se materializando em políticas estaduais e municipais. Para tanto, muito contribuiu a criação de fóruns — congregando sociedades científicas, entidades da sociedade civil, representantes da sociedade política, como ocorreu durante a elaboração da Constituição Federal, promulgada em 1988 —, a formulação do projeto da NLDB, precedida da realização periódica da Conferência Brasileira de Educação e o espaço conquistado pela área de Ciências Humanas e Sociais e da Educação nas Reuniões Anuais da SBPC. A produção científica discutida nos grupos de trabalho da ANPED, da ANPOCS, esta última contando com importante suporte da Fundação Ford, além dos inúmeros congressos, seminários, encontros organizados nesse período, concursos nacionais de pesquisa, alguns com o apoio também da Fundação Ford, pode ser assim socializada, avaliada, depurada, transformando-se paulatinamente em referência obrigatória do debate social e, por conseguinte, dar formulação de políticas governamentais.

No entanto, vale dizer que esse consenso quanto à centralidade dos problemas educacionais — universalização do ensino básico com qualidade, profissionalização de docentes, gestão das instituições de ensino — tem suscitado enormes divergências sobre sua operacionalização. Essas divergências parecem difíceis de serem suplantadas enquanto não se admitir a convivência entre diferentes projetos de sociedade.

Malgrado essa dificuldade evidente, que tem dado substrato a críticas como as que Simon Schwartzman fez no seu *paper*, parece-me que a construção da qualidade da educação, especialmente nos níveis do ensino básico e do ensino superior, tem dado ensejo a ações inovadoras que estão a aguardar discussão, avaliação, retificação, divulgação. No que diz respeito ao ensino básico, há a assinalar as iniciativas centradas na reflexão coletiva da prática pedagógica desenvolvida nas séries iniciais, com o apoio de instituições universitárias, e que têm propiciado melhorias efetivas no processo ensino-aprendizado, traduzidas por índices de alfabetização de 80 e 90 por cento, respectivamente em Pernambuco e Porto Alegre.

Tais iniciativas mostram que não só pesquisas quantitativas, de inestimável valor, como as de Sérgio Costa Ribeiro e Fletcher, citadas pelo autor, têm que ser consideradas nas definições de políticas educacionais, mas também pesquisas qualitativas. É preciso dizer que há quase uma década têm sido formuladas políticas voltadas para a melhoria de qualidade do ensino de 1º grau, orientadas por achados feitos na área de Ciências Humanas e Sociais e da Educação, a partir da utilização dos mais diversos métodos de produção de conhecimento. Aliás, seminário promovido pelo INEP, em 1988, em Brasília, mostrou que, com mais frequência do que é habitualmente admitido, as políticas de governos estaduais e municipais, ao longo da década de 1980, vêm considerando, na sua elaboração e acompanhamento, resultados de pesquisas desenvolvidas em instituições de pesquisa e na Pós-Graduação em Educação e nas áreas das Ciências Humanas e Sociais.

É bem verdade que as Ciências Sociais, particularmente a Sociologia, não têm tido como preocupação principal a educação, como assinalaram recentemente Gouveia (1989) e Cunha (1991), e que as pesquisas realizadas da área de educação carecem, muitas vezes, de rigor metodológico. Não seria, então, também esta uma questão a ser incluída na agenda sugerida por Simon Schwartzman, como merecendo consideração da ação futura da Fundação Ford? Talvez o apoio a um grupo de trabalho que reunisse pesquisadores sem preconceitos quanto a concepções de conhecimento científico, permitisse avançar, especialmente, na elaboração de formas de avaliação da aprendizagem que superassem a dimensão classificatória de alunos e de instituições. Estas formas de avaliação da aprendizagem poderiam ter como horizonte a indicação de caminhos capazes de sanar dificuldades do professorado de 1º grau, por exemplo, no ensino do conteúdo das diferentes disciplinas. Não seria essa uma forma concreta de atrair a instância universitária a se comprometer com o ensino de 1º grau, condição necessária ao seu próprio aperfeiçoamento?

A mesma perspectiva necessita ser desenvolvida em relação ao ensino superior, em particular nas universidades, para as quais a avaliação periódica de suas atividades é uma questão crucial, porque somente assim é possível apreender potencialidades e dificuldades de traçar roteiros de aprimoramento institucional. É talvez chegada a hora de colocar em contato, durante seminários, instituições universitárias, como a UFMG, UFRGS, USP, e núcleos de pesquisa como o NUPES, por exemplo, que têm proposto e experimentado formas de avaliação da instituição universitária.

No que diz respeito ao ensino médio, pergunto-me se se avançará mediante o intercâmbio com visitantes com experiência, sempre bem-vindos, diga-se de passagem, como sugere o autor. Parece-me mais urgente construir um consenso com respeito aos motivos da não concretização da Lei nº 5.692/71, para que seja possível discutir, por exemplo, a vinculação entre educação e trabalho e descobrir caminhos para sanar a sistemática falta de professores para o ensino de matemática, física e química nesse nível de ensino.

Concluo meus comentários reafirmando a importância da criação e desenvolvimento de competências mediante o fortalecimento de instituições consolidadas, do suporte a iniciativas emergentes, da ampliação do apoio à pesquisa, desenvolvida segundo as mais diversas perspectivas metodológicas, da articulação entre as diferentes instâncias institucionais — universidades, centros privados, ONGs. — Proponho uma ação de emergência destinada a atualizar o acervo bibliográfico de instituições que têm, reconhecidamente, contribuído para elevar o padrão de qualidade da formação de massa crítica nas áreas de Ciências Sociais e da Educação e para o aprofundamento do debate acerca dos diferentes temas e problemas que têm orientado a produção científica nessas áreas.

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